

Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, August 17, 2009 5:17 PM
Subject: US Senator John McCain holds talks with Kurdistan Region's leadership

US Senator John McCain on first visit to Erbil holds talks with Kurdistan Region leadership August 15, 2009

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) – Senators John McCain, Lindsey Graham, and Susan Collins arrived in Erbil today from Baghdad, accompanied by Ambassador Christopher Hill and senior officials. This was their first visit to the Kurdistan Region.

Senator McCain said that he was impressed by the sense of hope and optimism that he observed in the Kurdistan Region, and by the reconstruction and development efforts underway. The Senator acknowledged that, although he did not know every detail of the Region's history, he was aware of the suffering under the former regime. With strong regional leadership and US commitment to Iraq, he said, continued success in the Region can be achieved. The Senator also praised Kurdistan Region leadership for its election, which he said was largely heralded as free and fair by international observers.

Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani, Speaker of the Kurdistan Parliament Adnan Mufti, and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani met the delegation and hosted them to lunch.

President Barzani explained, "We in the Kurdistan Region appreciate the sacrifices and contributions of the US troops for the liberation of Iraq." He continued, "We believe in democracy and freedom, and our recent election in the Region exemplifies our commitment and enthusiasm for this process. In our dialogue with Iraq, we rely on the federal Constitution as the highest authority and the pillar of our democracy."

President Barzani said that the US contribution to Iraq cannot be measured only by the amount of troops deployed but also by its continued engagement in the political process, in order to ensure a stable and peaceful Iraq for the future.

In response to a question from the Senators on the federal hydrocarbons law and revenue sharing legislation, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani said, "We have operated under the framework of the Iraqi Constitution from the beginning, and we have done our best to reach an understanding. I believe that progress on revenue sharing legislation, in particular, will pave the way for greater understanding and dialogue on other outstanding issues."

The Prime Minister also emphasised the economic development in the Region and the opportunities for American firms to participate in trade and commerce.

After meeting with KRG officials, the Senators went to the US Regional Reconstruction Team compound, where they met American officials on the ground. The delegation was received at the airport by Dr Fuad Hussein, Chief of Staff to President Barzani, and Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir, Head of the Department of Foreign Relations.

Minister Bakir remarked, "The three Senators, Senator McCain in particular, have a great deal of influence on US decision making, and we are pleased with the opportunity to engage in substantive dialogue and to strengthen our friendship with the United States."

The Senators also had a tour of Erbil's ancient Citadel, including the Textile Museum and some restored

buildings. Musicians and dancers entertained the delegation.

Please visit the [photo gallery](#) for photos of the Senator's visit.

This article can be found at: www.krg.org

Note: BGR Government Affairs has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC

Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Friday, August 21, 2009 5:08 PM
Subject: Kurdistan Region President, MPs and Speaker of Parliament sworn into office

Kurdistan Region President, MPs and Speaker of Parliament sworn into office August 20, 2009

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) – The Kurdistan Region President was sworn into office before an audience at the Erbil Convention Centre today, 20 August 2009.

The Third Kurdistan Parliament held its first session at the same ceremony, swearing in Members of Parliament and naming the Speaker.

Mr Masoud Barzani has become the first popularly elected President of the Kurdistan Region in Iraq, winning nearly 70% of the total ballots. The Kurdistan Region's presidential and parliamentary elections were held on 25 July, with voter turnout of 78%.

After taking the oath, President Barzani addressed the audience. He said, "I would like to express my appreciation to the people of the Kurdistan Region. There were many different political lists competing in this election, but in the end the winners were the people of the Kurdistan Region. We have shown our bright future of democracy to the world."

President of Iraq Mr Jalal Talabani praised the democratic nature of the elections, and said, "I would like to congratulate my brother, Masoud Barzani, and all of the Members of Parliament."

Departing speaker, Mr Adnan Mufti, began the ceremony by outlining the achievements of the Second Kurdistan Parliament and the importance of building on lessons learned. He then closed the Second Kurdistan Parliament and invited Mr Sherwan Haidery, the oldest current parliamentarian, to chair the opening session of the Third Parliament.

Mr Haidery swore in Members of Parliament and then solicited suggestions from the political lists for the position of Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and Secretary. Dr Kamal Kirkuki, former Deputy Speaker, was chosen as the new Speaker. Dr Aslan Bayez and Mr Fursat Abdullah were named Deputy Speaker and Secretary, respectively.

Dr Kirkuki, accepting the position, said, "We hope to build on our past success and to promote the democratic character of this Region." He added, "Among the political parties, we have to work together honestly and faithfully, with determination, in the interests of the people of the Kurdistan Region."

Vice-President of Iraq Mr Adel Abdul Mahdi sent a congratulatory letter to President Barzani and the people of the Kurdistan Region, hailing the election as transparent, commending the enthusiasm of citizens for the process, and wishing the best of luck to the newly elected MPs.

In addition, the Prime Minister of Iraq Mr Nouri al-Maliki, sent a high-level delegation to attend the ceremony.

The day before the ceremony, a series of bombings in Baghdad left dozens dead and hundreds wounded. Every speaker condemned the attacks strongly and expressed sorrow for the victims and their families.

The ceremony was attended by representatives of the following countries: United States, United Kingdom, Brazil, France, Russia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Germany, Italy, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Denmark, and the Netherlands.

Members of Iraq's federal Council of Ministers and Council of Representatives, and representatives from the Multi-National Force in Iraq, the United Nations, and the European Commission also attended the event.

Masoud Barzani Inaugurated for Second Term as President of the Kurdistan Region

August 20, 2009

Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq (KRP.org) - Masoud Mustafa Barzani was sworn in today as President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq at a ceremony at the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament in Erbil.

President Masoud Barzani was re-elected President of the Kurdistan Region for a second term winning around 70% of the votes in last month's election. This is the first time the President is voted directly by voters. In 2005, President Barzani was elected by the parliament.

During his inaugural speech, the President thanked the people of the Kurdistan Region for entrusting him to lead the Region for a second term. He also welcomed the emergence of opposition groups in the new parliament and said: "having members from different affiliations will make this parliament more active and lively."

President Barzani said that his top priority as President would be "preserving the unity of our people.

He also stressed the importance of peaceful co-existence between Arabs and Kurds in Iraq. "I also reaffirm our historical relations with Arabs. Friendship between Kurds and Arabs must be the foundation for Iraq," added the President.

On relations with the federal Iraqi government the President remarked, "Our parliament has stipulated that we will remain within Iraq; within a federal and democratic Iraq. After the fall of the regime, together with Mam Jalal [Jalal Talabani, current President of Iraq], we travelled to Baghdad and we demonstrated that we are keen on maintaining the unity and integrity of Iraq and the friendship of Kurds and Arabs, as well as Kurds and Assyrians and Chaldeans and Turkmens. We now reiterate that, even though there may be differences in opinion, neither we, nor people in Baghdad, must let our enemies exploit the situation and destroy our friendship and our freedom. We have a Constitution. Whenever there are differences, we must return to the Constitution for the resolution of any problems. We were all allies of each other, we fought alongside each other, and we sacrificed in blood together. From now on, we must also work together in the building of a democratic and federal Iraq. I once again reiterate that the Constitution will be the point of reference for any problems we may have."

The President also stressed that ties with neighbouring countries must be improved and specifically commented on relations with Turkey, saying: "I am very pleased about the recent developments and the positive changes introduced in Turkey. We hope that these steps are continued for the benefit of all sides. We express our pleasure with the emergence of this positive atmosphere in Turkey."

President Barzani was sworn in shortly after the 111 newly elected MPs of the Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament were sworn in.

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, several Ambassadors, members of the foreign corps in Erbil and Baghdad, and dignitaries from Iraq and other countries attended the ceremony.

Read the full speech

These articles can be found at: www.krg.org and www.krp.org

Note: BGR Government Affairs has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington,

Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Saturday, September 05, 2009 6:08 PM
Subject: Kurdistan Region Rejects Postponement of National Census

Kurdistan Region Rejects Postponement of National Census

Press Release

Kurdistan Region Presidency

3 September 2009

In response to unfounded fears and doubts, on 2 September 2009 the Iraqi cabinet decided to postpone the general census for one year, from October 2009 to October 2010. This decision is detrimental to the development of the political process in the new Iraq and to the best interests of the Iraqi people.

The Iraqi Council of Representatives (the parliament) that represents the majority of the Iraqi people approved a census to be conducted on 24 October 2009. The parliament called for a countrywide census no later than 31 December 2009 through a provision in the federal budget law No. 6 for 2009. This decision commanded the approval of not only the parliament but also the leadership of the Kurdistan Region, and even the support of Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani.

The postponement decision comes following repeated reassurances by the Iraqi Ministry of Planning that it is fully capable of conducting the census in October 2009. Over an extended period, the Planning Ministry has put in place comprehensive procedures for a first-of-its-kind census in Iraq that aims to meet the highest international standards. By forming monitoring teams composed of all political parties the Ministry has professionally taken into account the concerns of those who fear irregularities.

How can the federal Iraqi cabinet encroach its powers? Regrettably, those opposed to the census are those who oppose the Iraqi Constitution, the principle of national consensus, and the will of the Iraqi people. Unfortunately, these limited opposition voices have found support within the cabinet of the federal government.

The parliament, the federal government's own Ministry of Planning, all political parties, and even the UN Mission in Iraq do not favour postponing the census.

We would like to know the real reason behind this decision by the Iraqi Cabinet, especially when we consider baseless and unconvincing reasons, like the possibility of irregularities, or putting off the census until after amendments are made to the Constitution. Have unfounded concerns and demands of a few compelled the Iraqi Cabinet to postpone this momentous exercise that aims to benefit all citizens?

There are clearly political motives behind the decision to put off the census. These motives are related to efforts to abandon Article-140 of the Iraqi Constitution and to abort Article-20 of the federal budget law of the 2009 fiscal year.

Iraq urgently requires a census to promote the political process and to better plan its progress and economic development. Postponing the census will only do harm to Iraq's social, economic, and political development. Indeed, the census is being taken hostage by the unfounded fears and political motives of a few who do not have the best interests of Iraq at heart.

We again reiterate that we want the rights of all sides to be respected and protected. We are against the fabricated trepidations of a few as a pretext to deny others their rights.

Together we fought for Iraq and for its people. We shall remain committed to the Iraqi Constitution as we shall remain committed to oppose all who stand in the way of Iraq striving toward prosperity and reclaiming its future.

We call on the Iraqi Cabinet to reconsider its decision to postpone the census. Only the parliament has such authority. We call on the Iraqi parliament to consider this matter seriously and act accordingly.

We further call on all sides to object to this disruptive action which will undoubtedly add another blow to the political and democratic process as well as to diminish Iraq's constitutional gains. Unless reconsidered, this decision will inhibit efforts being made to move Iraq farther along on its way to social, economic, and political development from its current sad state.

This press release can be found at: www.krp.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Tuesday, September 08, 2009 5:34 PM
Subject: KRG President Barzani, US Ambassador Hill reiterate support for joint security operations

President Barzani, Ambassador Hill reiterate support for joint security operations September 7, 2009

Kurdistan Region, Iraq (KRP.org) - Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani received Christopher Hill, the United States Ambassador to Iraq and several officials from the US Embassy.

The meeting focused on recent political and security developments in Iraq, as well as relations between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the Iraqi federal government, and the upcoming general elections in Iraq which are slated for January 2010.

Both President Barzani and the US Ambassador reiterated their support for a plan for joint security patrols and operations in the so-called disputed areas by the US, Iraqi and Kurdish peshmerga forces.

Following their meeting, President Barzani and Ambassador Hill visited the Barzan Anfal Memorial site and the last resting place of the late Mustafa Barzani and Idris Barzani to pay their respects.

This article can be found at: www.krp.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, September 17, 2009 6:35 PM
Subject: KRG President Masoud Barzani meets with Vice President Biden in Erbil

President Barzani, US Vice President: constitution and dialogue key to resolving outstanding issues between Erbil and Baghdad

September 17, 2009

Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq (KRP.org) – Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani welcomed US Vice President, Mr Joseph Biden, in Erbil today and later in a meeting discussed a number of outstanding issues between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the federal government in Baghdad.

In his remarks, the US Vice President echoed President Barzani's remarks that the constitution is key to resolving the outstanding issues between Erbil and Baghdad: "As the President said to me, they can only resolve these issues within the constitution and through good-faith negotiations between the Kurdistan Regional Government and Iraqi national government."

Mr. Biden later reaffirmed US government support to Iraq and the Kurdistan Region: "We stand ready to continue this relationship with President Barzani and other leaders of Iraq."

Following their meeting, the President and the US Vice President spoke to reporters about their meeting. Below are the full excerpts of the remarks by President Barzani and US Vice President Biden:

Mr. Barzani: I would like to warmly welcome Mr. Joe Biden. In our meeting, we discussed relations between the Kurdistan Region, as part of Iraq, and the US. We discussed several issues and we both stressed the need for negotiations and dialogue to solve the issues. We also reaffirmed our commitment to address these issues. Once again I would like to warmly welcome you and hope that these meetings will be frequent and continue.

Mr. Biden: Thank you Mr President for your hospitality. I seem to bring bad weather to Erbil. When I was to meet with you last there was a severe sandstorm and we had to postpone the meeting. As the President knows I very much wanted to return to Erbil. I had the pleasure of being here sometime ago and it is an honour to be back.

Last time the weather prevented my making it to Erbil. I promised President Barzani and President Talabani that I would make a return visit and I make that promise again. The US understands that the Kurdish people like so many other Iraqis suffered terribly under the rule of the regime of Saddam Hussein and the US and the rest of the world will never forget that. The transformation and economic development since 2003, indeed since the 1990s, has been truly a remarkable transformation and a success story. We landed in a beautiful airport even though it wasn't instrument landing. And during the ride through the city I was once again struck as I was 7 years ago by how much positive activity, building and development has taken place.

We have spoken several times on phone over the past few months, and I apologise for monopolising so much of his time in our private meeting. As the President suggested, there are a number of very important issues that we wanted to discuss. President Barzani and the new Kurdish parliament are going to face a number of key issues in the upcoming term. And I have been impressed by the willingness and the commitment of the President to begin to negotiate in good faith with his colleagues in Baghdad on a number of these issues.

As the President said to me, they can only resolve these issues within the constitution and through good-faith

negotiations between the Kurdistan Regional Government and Iraqi national government. He knows and we all know that these are difficult issues; if they weren't, they would have been resolved along time ago. So I commend President Barzani and President Talabani, as well as meetings I had yesterday with Prime Minister Maliki, who are, I believe, striving to resolve some of these very difficult issues that are outstanding.

Although we did discuss specific details, I think it is totally inappropriate for us to discuss publicly, but let me say that I am convinced that there is good faith and a genuine desire to reach a fair compromise among all the parties that I mentioned. The US fully understands and recognises and supports the notion that there is a sovereign Iraqi government, but we stand ready to use our good offices to support Iraqi national unity. Above all the US remains committed to a long term bilateral relationship with united Iraq. We stand ready to continue this relationship with President Barzani and other leaders of Iraq, and all those who are willing to make this country safer and to take the concrete, although difficult, steps that still remain to ensure Iraq's long-term success and unity.

Mr President if you don't mind a personal reference. I am a genuine admirer of the courage that you showed when your people were under persecution of Saddam Hussein and your courageous leadership. I look forward to continuing our discussions.

Mr. Barzani: Thank you.

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, September 28, 2009 4:31 PM
Subject: KRG Head of Foreign Relations meets US officials in Washington

Head of Foreign Relations meets US officials in Washington September 28, 2009

Washington DC, US (KRG.org) – Kurdistan Regional Government Head of Foreign Relations Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir on Friday concluded his week-long visit to Washington DC, where he met with American officials, academics and business leaders, working to bolster ties with the US and to encourage investment in the Kurdistan Region.

“The people of the Kurdistan Region are committed to strengthening our relationship with the United States,” Mr Bakir said. “We believe the US must remain engaged to ensure that all of Iraq can develop into a peaceful and prosperous nation - which will only happen if the federal constitution of Iraq, to which the Kurdistan Regional Government is committed, is upheld.”

During the visit, Mr Bakir met several members of Congress, representatives from the Departments of State, Defense, Commerce, the National Security Council, the Office of the Vice President, the Chamber of Commerce, several think tanks and the media. He raised awareness with officials and addressed overall security concerns in Iraq, and the recent Kurdistan Region’s elections and socioeconomic development.

“Following Vice President Biden’s recent trip to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Minister Bakir’s visit to the US demonstrates the importance of our continued dialogue with America”, said Mr Qubad Talabani, the KRG’s Representative to the US, who accompanied him at the meetings. “We wanted to reiterate our support for the normalisation of relations between the US and Iraq and we look forward to playing an important role, as the KRG, in that normalisation process.”

In a briefing with members of the media, Mr Bakir said that Kurdistan is open for business and that a free market economy will be the driving force behind the Kurdistan Region’s continued growth, stability and prosperity. In addition, he talked of measures that have been instituted to encourage transparency and good governance. Mr Bakir also encouraged investment in environmental reconstruction, infrastructure, housing, agriculture, industry and banking and finance sectors.

This article can be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Friday, October 02, 2009 6:26 PM
Subject: KRG President Masoud Barzani appoints Dr. Barham Salih to form the new government

President Barzani tasks Barham Salih to form new government

October 1, 2009

Salahaddin, Kurdistan - Iraq (KRP.org) – Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani today formally charged Dr Barham Salih to form the next Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) at a ceremony in Salahaddin.

"Today I appoint you to officially form the government and I hope that you will consult with all the political parties in Kurdistan to form a broad-based government," President Barzani said at today's ceremony in Salahaddin.

The President also said, "We are proud and thankful for the previous government for their work" and hoped that the new government would complement and carry on the work of the previous one.

Dr Barham Salih, the new KRG Prime Minister will head the sixth cabinet since 1992. Mr Azad Barwari takes the post of deputy Prime Minister in the new government.

In presidential and parliamentary elections held in July in the Kurdistan Region, the Kurdistan List representing the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) won around 60 percent of the popular vote. Dr Barham Salih is a prominent member of the PUK and was formerly Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister, while Azad Barwari is a senior member of the KDP.

This article can be found at: www.krg.org and www.krp.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Friday, October 23, 2009 5:04 PM
Subject: KRG delegation tells US business leaders Kurdistan is open for business

KRG delegation tells US business leaders Kurdistan is open for business

October 23, 2009

Washington DC, United States of America (KRG.org) – A high level delegation from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) participated in a two-day conference in Washington this week promoting investment and increased economic activity between Iraq and the United States.

The Iraqi delegation, headed by Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki, included strong representation from the KRG, including Chairman of the Kurdistan Board of Investment Mr Herish Muharam; Minister for Planning Mr Osman Shwani; Minister for Electricity Mr Hoshyar Siwaily; Minister for Water Resources Mr Tahsin Qadir; and the three governors Mr Tamar Ramadan (Dohuk), Mr Nawzad Hadi (Erbil) and Mr Dana Ahmed Majeed (Suleimania).

“The Kurdistan Region is open for business and should be considered a gateway for any investors doing business in Iraq,” Mr Muharam of the Investment Board told the conference. “Participation in conferences like this gives us an opportunity to highlight the investor-friendly climate of the Kurdistan Region and discuss all the business potential that exists.” He added, “We cannot do this alone.”

The conference’s keynote address was delivered by U.S. Secretary of State Ms Hillary Clinton who outlined the priorities the U.S. has in Iraq: “First, working to aid the Iraqi Government in its efforts to promote national unity and resolve political conflicts, such as disputes over Kirkuk. Second, we will support Iraq’s efforts to build strong relationships with its neighbours in the region. Third, we will promote the return and resettlement of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced people, a critical step for healing society. And fourth, we will support Iraq’s economic development and full integration into the global economy.”

The U.S.-Iraq Business and Investment Conference (USIBIC), co-hosted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Investment Council of Iraq, is part of broader U.S. policy to normalise relations with Iraq and strengthen economic partnerships as a way to foster democracy and federalism. The conference focused on 12 industry sectors: agriculture, banking and finance, defence, electricity, health, education, telecommunications, housing and construction, industry, oil and gas, tourism, and transportation. During breakout sessions, members of the KRG delegation provided detailed overviews of particular sectors and discussed the investment needs.

Erbil Governor Mr Hadi said, “The success of Kurdistan Region to rapidly develop its infrastructure and business community reinforces the necessity for federalism in Iraq, which should clearly be strengthened to encourage further prosperity and opportunity for all.”

More than 900 companies participated in the conference from October 19 to 21 in Washington. In addition to Secretary Clinton, speakers included Prime Minister Maliki and U.S. National Security Advisor General James Jones. The Iraq delegation included several ministers from the federal and regional governments, including the KRG and other provinces, and members of the Iraqi parliament.

“Business-to-business relationships form the foundation of enduring bonds between nations and are particularly important for the future of our relationship with the U.S.,” said Mr Qubad Talabani, KRG Representative to the

U.S. “Indeed, increased economic development will only serve to ensure the sacrifices made by Americans in Iraq will lead to a free and prosperous country.”

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Tuesday, October 27, 2009 10:38 AM
Subject: Political Parties in the Kurdistan Region Hold Meeting on Elections in Iraq

Kurdistan Region Parties Call for Elections in Iraq on Time

October 25, 2009

Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq (KRP.org) - At the request of Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani, a meeting was held in Erbil today 22 October 2009 between the representatives of all the political parties and movements that will participate in the upcoming general elections in Iraq, scheduled for January 16th 2009.

This broad meeting, which was chaired by President Masoud Barzani, discussed a number of important issues including the elections law being debated in the Iraqi Parliament and holding elections in Iraq including in Kirkuk.

The participants issued a communiqué following their meeting in which they underline the importance of unifying the Kurdish position with regards to these issues and also demanded that elections must be held in Kirkuk on the same day as the rest of the country. They rejected the division of Kirkuk into different electoral zones based on ethnic makeup, as this is in violation of the principles of democracy and the Iraqi Constitution. The communiqué insists that Article-140 of the Iraqi Constitution must be implemented.

The communiqué also recommends the holding of similar meetings more regularly to facilitate joint work and cooperation among all the different political entities in the Kurdistan Region. It ends by thanking members of the Iraqi Parliament who are standing up for the rights of the people of the Kurdistan Region and other sympathetic Iraqi parliamentarians, as well as President Barzani for his initiative in calling the meeting.

This article can be found at: www.krp.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Tuesday, October 27, 2009 4:05 PM
Subject: KRG signs long-term engagement with PwC to support its Good Governance and Transparency Strategy

KRG signs long-term engagement with PwC to support its Good Governance and Transparency Strategy

Kurdistan Regional Government
Council of Ministers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

25th October 2009

The Kurdistan Regional Government has reached an agreement with PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC), one of the world's leading professional services companies, to implement its Good Governance and Transparency Strategy. Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani first launched this strategy on 12 July 2009, with the aim of improving government accountability and efficiency.

In July 2008 the KRG invited the assistance of one of the world's largest financial and accountancy consulting firms – Pricewaterhouse Coopers, US, to undertake a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of government procedures and operations. Following the official launch of this strategy by Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani in July 2009, the KRG is now moving forward to the implementation phase of the project.

Prime Minister Barzani reiterated that the implementation of this strategy "Will help to make the KRG more responsive in the future by making the government more efficient and ensuring that public funds are used appropriately. As a result, it will improve the delivery of services to the people of the Kurdistan Region and help to raise living standards".

The KRG's strategy is based on the following four principles:

- The KRG is founded on the basis of the rule of law.
- Public service is a public trust.
- Governmental functions are to be open and transparent.
- Public funds must always be used for their intended purposes.

PwC Partner David Jansen said that the Kurdistan Regional Government has joined a growing, global movement focused on building or strengthening governance and anti-corruption systems to attract foreign direct investment, stimulate domestic growth and increase standards of living"

"Governments around the world - - national, sub-national, state, or local - - are recognizing the importance of robust governance, transparency and anti-corruption efforts. These efforts are critical to ensure that public funds are used for intended purposes and that business will have increased confidence when entering the region."

The strategy is based on international leading practices, and it is designed to bring the Kurdistan region closer to the global community whom are working to safeguard integrity and improve transparency.

For further information please contact:

Miss Nisar Talabany ([nisar.talabany\(at\)krg.org](mailto:nisar.talabany(at)krg.org)) - Adviser to the Prime Minister
Mr Jhilwan Qazzaz ([jhilwan.qazzaz\(at\)krg.org](mailto:jhilwan.qazzaz(at)krg.org)) - Project coordinator

This press-release can be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Tuesday, October 27, 2009 6:27 PM
Subject: Ambassador Susan Rice Visits the Kurdistan Region

US Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice arrives in Erbil

October 25, 2009

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) – United States Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Susan Rice arrived in Erbil today to meet the President of the Kurdistan Region.

Ambassador Rice expressed her pleasure in visiting the Kurdistan Region, and noted the impressive pace of reconstruction and the sense of security established in Erbil. The ambassador met Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani, outgoing Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, KRG Prime Minister designate Barham Salih, and a number of senior officials.

The primary topic of discussion was the upcoming national election and the delay in passing the election law. Both sides emphasised the necessity of conducting the elections on time, and in all governorates of Iraq – including Kirkuk. Iraq is scheduled to hold national parliamentary elections in January 2010.

President Barzani briefed Ms Rice, who was in the Region for the first time, on the history of suffering and resilience that has characterised the people of the Kurdistan Region. He said, “We have had to face tremendous hardship. Many died under the genocidal terror of the previous regime. But we never gave up, and the 1991 uprising was the beginning of a new era in this Region.”

The President added, “Since 2003, we have been absolutely dedicated to the political process in Iraq – and to the principles of democracy, federalism and pluralism. This is why the Kurdistan Region insists on free and fair elections, and a federal government committed to the prosperity and security of all the peoples of Iraq.”

Ambassador Rice praised the KRG participation in the US–Iraq Business and Investment Conference in Washington this week. The economic progress of the Region, the relationship between the Region and federal Iraq, and the current and future role of the US in Iraq were also discussed, including reference to the US status of forces agreement.

Ms Rice commended the Kurdistan Region leadership for its efforts to establish good relations with its neighbours, pointing particularly to growing ties with Turkey. The Kurdistan Region representatives were thankful for continued US support, and raised the possibility of upgrading the level of US representation in the Region to consulate general status.

President Barzani’s Chief of Staff Dr Fuad Hussein and Head of the KRG Department of Foreign Relations Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir received at the airport Ambassador Rice with Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Mr Michael Corbin, Baghdad Embassy Charge d’Affaires Ambassador Robert Ford and other officials.

The delegation had the opportunity to visit historic Erbil, tour the Erbil citadel’s Textile Museum and restored buildings, pass by the central marketplace and see cultural activities, including traditional bread-making, music and dancing.

This article can be found at: www.krg.org

Note: BGR Government Affairs, LLC has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Wednesday, October 28, 2009 5:12 PM
Subject: New KRG Prime Minister Dr. Barham Salih pledges renewal as cabinet is sworn in

Prime Minister Salih pledges renewal as cabinet is sworn in

October 28, 2009

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) – Dr Barham Salih, the new Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, announced the vision and policies of the newly appointed government today after he and his cabinet took their oath of office.

In his address to the Kurdistan Parliament, Prime Minister Salih thanked former Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani and the previous cabinet for their achievements. He pledged to maintain the Kurdistan Region's peace and stability, while seeking renewal and reform and focusing on good governance and delivery of services to the people.

The new cabinet has been streamlined by reducing it to 19 ministries. This is a reduction from 27 ministries and eight ministers without portfolio in the previous cabinet.

The cabinet was ratified by the Kurdistan Parliament and took its oath of office in the presence of Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani, former Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, MPs, Iraqi federal government officials and foreign diplomats.

Prime Minister Salih pledged that the KRG will listen closely to young people, women and the elderly, giving priority to education, health, roads, housing and increasing the income of the Kurdistan people.

He said that the cabinet will give attention to areas where genocide was committed, such as Halabja, and will work hard for the international recognition of the Anfal genocide.

Regarding the Iraqi political process, Dr Salih stressed Kurdistan's friendship with the Arab and other communities in Iraq and the constitution as the key to resolving outstanding issues.

The Kurdistan Region in Iraq will continue to have good relations with its neighbours, and the increasing economic relations with Turkey will bring the two closer together in other areas, the Prime Minister said.

Dr Salih was appointed Prime Minister by the Kurdistan List coalition, which won the Kurdistan Region parliamentary elections in July with 58 percent of the vote, and voter turnout of nearly 80 percent. Mr Azad Barwari, a senior member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, was appointed Deputy Prime Minister.

The cabinet is made up of members of the coalition parties the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Islamic Movement, and includes ministers from the Christian, Turkmen and Yezidi communities. Dr Salih thanked the leaders of the coalition parties, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and Kurdistan Region's President Barzani, for their support.

A senior member of the PUK, Prime Minister Salih heads the sixth Kurdistan Region cabinet since 1992. Before this appointment, he was the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq from 2006, and the federal Minister of Planning from 2005. Before the liberation of Iraq, he served as the Prime Minister of the Suleimaniah administration of the Kurdistan Region.

Prime Minister Salih takes over from Mr Nechirvan Barzani, who served as the first prime minister of the Kurdistan Region since the liberation of Iraq and after the historic 2006 unification agreement between the KDP and PUK.

This article can be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Saturday, October 31, 2009 4:01 PM
Subject: KRG President Barzani, Turkey's Foreign Minister Davutoğlu hold historic meetings, announce plans to open consulate

President Barzani, Turkey's Foreign Minister Davutoğlu hold historic meetings, announce plans to open consulate

October 31, 2009

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) – Turkey's Foreign Minister Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu yesterday arrived in Erbil for talks with Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani, the first ever Turkish foreign minister to visit the Region.

At a press conference following the meeting President Barzani said, "This visit of the Foreign Minister to Erbil is an important step, indeed a historic step. We know that Turkey has an important role in our development, and this relationship requires special attention. I am therefore delighted to announce that Turkey will open a Consulate General in Erbil."

Mr Davutoğlu was accompanied by State Minister for Foreign Trade Mr Zafer Çağlayan, Turkey's Ambassador to Iraq, senior government officials, and a large delegation of business people and journalists.

The landmark visit marks the first time a Turkish foreign minister has travelled to the Kurdistan Region in Iraq. At a joint press conference, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu and President Barzani spoke with great optimism on a number of issues, including security, enhancement of commercial ties, and economic cooperation.

President Barzani welcomes Turkish Prime Minister's policy of openness

President Barzani said, "I would like to praise the policy of openness announced by the Turkish Prime Minister. We want peace and stability. We fully support the initiatives of the Turkish government, we congratulate them, and we support them in the interests of the whole Middle East."

Mr Davutoğlu said he felt at home in Erbil, and thanked President Barzani for the hospitality. The Foreign Minister highlighted the importance of economic trade but also cultural exchange. He called upon Turks, Kurds, Arabs and Turkmen to rebuild the Middle East as brothers. Mr Davutoğlu told the audience that their threat was Turkey's threat as well. He said that Turkey looks forward to cooperating with its Kurdish brothers, and the fraternal relations must not be ruptured. While addressing President Barzani, the Foreign Minister said that Turkey could serve as a bridge to Europe for you, while you could serve as a gateway to the Gulf for Turkey.

Foreign Minister Davutoğlu and the political delegation met with the Kurdistan Region's leadership, including President Barzani, Speaker of the Kurdistan Region Parliament Kamal Kirkuki, Prime Minister Barham Salih, former Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari, and senior Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) officials.

Turkish business delegation meets government officials and business representatives

At the same time Minister Çağlayan headed a delegation of 80 business representatives which participated in a business forum with KRG officials at Erbil Convention Centre, accompanied by the KRG Minister of Trade and Industry Mr Sinan Abdulkhalq Ahmed Chalabi. The delegation was then received at the Khanzad Resort for a

dinner reception with the Kurdistan Region Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Kurdistan Region Contractors Union, while Minister Çağlayan joined Mr. Davutoğlu for political talks with the KRG leadership.

The Turkish delegation of 130 people also included 20 journalists and 80 business representatives, in addition to the Turkish government officials.

The delegation was received at the airport by Prime Minister Barham Salih, Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari, Kurdistan Region President Chief of Staff Fuad Hussein, and Head of the KRG Department of Foreign Relations Falah Mustafa Bakir.

This morning the delegation visited Ishik University, a Turkish institution in Erbil, and the Qaisari bazaar. Foreign Minister Davutoğlu had the chance to interact with some local citizens and tour the historic Erbil Citadel.

Turkey's agreement with Iraq for all parts of the country

The Republic of Turkey has recently taken a number of steps to foster greater understanding with the Kurdish population of its own country. At the same time, the relationship between Turkey and the Kurdistan Region in Iraq has expanded considerably over the last several years, based on flourishing trade and commerce.

Mr Davutoğlu arrived in Erbil from Basra, and will next travel to Mosul. Turkey recently signed a 48 point agreement on cooperation with Iraq, and Mr Davutoğlu said that he wanted to ensure that the cooperation agreement would be fully implemented in all parts of Iraq, including the KRG-administered territories.

Turkey is by far the largest contributor to foreign direct investment in the Kurdistan Region, and Turkish firms are active in a wide range of commercial sectors. Many firms have established their bases in the Region, with a view to expanding to the rest of Iraq when the security situation permits.

The KRG continues its policy of openness and strengthening ties with the international community, particularly neighbouring countries. Former Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari, and senior KRG officials went to the airport to bid farewell to the Foreign Minister and the delegation.

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Tuesday, November 03, 2009 5:37 PM
Subject: Inaugural speech by KRG Prime Minister Barham Salih

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Inaugural speech by Prime Minister Barham Salih

Kurdistan Parliament, Erbil, 28th October 2009
Inaugural speech by KRG Prime Minister Barham Salih

In the name of God the most merciful, the most compassionate.
Your Excellency, Mr Masoud Barzani, President of the Region,
Your Excellency, Speaker of the Kurdistan Parliament,
Dear members of the Kurdistan Parliament,
Distinguished guests,

I have the utmost gratitude for your support and for approving and endorsing the sixth cabinet of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The support and endorsement that you granted to me and to my dear colleague Mr Azad Barwari, and all the ministers of our cabinet are an honour and a solemn responsibility. They will, undoubtedly, motivate us to work and serve our people and implement the government's agenda: the agenda of *renewal and reconstruction*, so that the new government can deliver to the extent of the hopes and expectations of the people of Kurdistan Region.

The sixth cabinet has the accumulated experience of many terms of governance in Kurdistan. We have with us here at the ceremony, Dr Fuad Ma'soum, the Prime Minister of the first KRG Cabinet, and Mr Kosrat Rasul, the Prime Minister of the second cabinet, to them and to all the previous cabinet leaders; we value highly your role and your efforts.

This cabinet will take over from an active cabinet, led by my dear colleague Mr Nechirvan Barzani, who led the cabinet through administrative unification and reconstruction. He leaves office proudly at a productive stage and a new chapter in the political life of Kurdistan.

Mr Barzani, his Deputy Mr Imad Ahmed, and all their colleagues deserve our special regard and gratitude for all their endeavours and efforts, for their successes in delivering public services, the provision of electricity, water and fuel, the success in oil production, economic development and various forms of reconstruction.

I personally and on behalf of Mr Azad Barwari as well as my colleagues in this cabinet, would like to thank Mr Barzani, Mr Imad Ahmed, and your colleagues.
Mr Barzani, I am personally counting on your continuous support and advice, as a dear friend and brother, and I am certain that you will be supportive with the same passion and enthusiasm for the KRG.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This new cabinet assumes office under a new political climate; we will face vast responsibilities within the framework of the new government prepared agenda. This includes the responsibility of protecting and expanding upon our achievements, maintaining several critical initiatives of the [previous] fifth Cabinet in terms of administrative and financial reform, and also the responsibility of resolving the shortcomings that we have not yet been able to tackle.

We know that the citizens of the Kurdistan Region, from all backgrounds, including the families of the proud fallen and Anfal victims, look to us with the utmost hope. Garmian and Halabja are expecting more reconstruction. Similarly, Badinan expects further development; Erbil, Suleimaniah and Dohuk are waiting for better services. Our villages are in need of more schools, health centres and better roads. Therefore, we pledge to work wholeheartedly to implement the agenda that we proposed during the election campaign.

We are committed to the implementation of the agenda of *renewal and reconstruction*; we want to transform our words into action. We all know that there is criticism of government performance and the methods of self-rule, since our government has not been able to fulfill all the needs and wishes of the people of Kurdistan. We hear such criticism and comments, and we will not shy away from them. We cannot ignore the fact that a large part of the problem was caused by the dual administration system of the past and the political situation of the Kurdistan Region at that time.

Yes, today, after 18 years of self-governance by the people of the Kurdistan Region, even with all of our achievements and pride, we should demonstrate that we need change, revival and reform and show that we will not stand still upon our achievements. In the last elections, the majority of the people of Kurdistan voted for the Kurdistan List, showing a renewed trust in the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). However, a considerable number did not vote for us. I would like to show appreciation for the trust of the people who voted for us, while at the same time state that we hear the criticisms of those who did not vote for us. We will try our best to live up to the expectations of our supporters, and to regain the confidence of others.

People are expecting more from us, and they certainly deserve better. But we want to be honest with our people, openly stating that solutions to current problems and shortcomings cannot be achieved overnight. In confronting the current problems, especially corruption, attacking the interests of the corrupt people would prompt some obstructions. The key to success in the fight against corruption is the rule of law and transparency in government activity. In this respect, the President of the Kurdistan Region has put forward a recommendation regarding empowering the role of the public prosecutor. Therefore in this cabinet the Minister of Justice, Judge Rauf, will also shoulder the duty of Public Prosecutor; ensuring that dossiers of corruption and mismanagement of public funds will be sent to court.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are planning to unify the institutions of the Asayish [intelligence and security] and Peshmerga forces and the finance institutions once and for all; virtually terminating the last trace of the dual administration system. We will also, through plans and actions, put an end to political party interference in governmental affairs, so that we become the government of our citizens under an active parliament without discrimination. We will work shoulder to shoulder for a civilised religious and ethnic coexistence, based on the rights of the citizen. We will work to provide the necessary atmosphere for political activity and the development of multi-party traditions by amending the laws pertaining to parties and communities, and also by issuing a law regarding political party funding.

We will promote political freedom and public determination. We hope that civil society, media outlets, and journalists will play better roles in promoting public opinion and expanding the circle of democracy. We want the youth and women to have an area of activity, freedom of work and broader participation in our Region's political decisions. We advise the youth of Kurdistan: you are valuable assets, the future of Kurdistan will be guaranteed through your development and provision of opportunities to you, whether within government or within society. One of the ways to achieve this objective is to reorganise the government structure in a way that creates space for capable and qualified youth.

The economy has undoubtedly undergone considerable progress in all respects, and the current living standards

in contrast with the past and in comparison with other parts of Iraq are higher. In addition, in our proposed platform, we have designed further development plans for all areas of economic growth and service delivery, such as education and higher education, health, agriculture and irrigation, roads, resolving the housing problems for low-income citizens, increasing the income level of the individual and the living standards of the lower class.

With regards to the Region's public budget, we will adopt a balanced and fair policy to meet the needs and requirements of the whole Kurdistan Region without prejudice. We will work for precise transparent monitoring through the Parliament Audit Committees, and we will work towards diversifying the sources of income and disclosing our expenditures. We will aim to establish an integrity commission for monitoring and investigation, and a law will be issued requiring properties of officials to be made public. These are necessary agenda items for improving financial policy, tackling the corruption phenomenon, and establishing better transparency in government activity.

The coordination of parliamentary blocks with the government will be our path to success. Let the opposition, as a new parliamentary experience, not engage the government with unnecessary issues. Rather, it should be a model for administrative and realistic reform and to empower democracy and the political process. This request places dual responsibility on the government and the opposition. The political situation in the Region and the challenges that it faces demands that we all work hand in hand to protect our experience, development and progress. We must strive together to regain unachieved rights for the people of Kurdistan and to guarantee a bright future for the democratic and constitutional experience in Iraq.

We cannot assume that the proceedings in Iraq, the region and the world will not have an effect on us. In the next four years, the political process in Iraq will become harder and more complicated. Therefore, our unity and the political blocks' support in strengthening governance in Kurdistan will strengthen our position in confronting any challenges and handling any unexpected events.

This along with the expectations of people, youth and other constituents, of government in fulfilling their goals and meeting their needs, while making them also responsible in contributing to the process of strengthening governance and implementing the *Renewal and Reconstruction* platform.

Pending issues between Baghdad and Erbil

The [Iraqi] Constitution guarantees coexistence among the Iraqi factions, and the majority of the Iraqi people have voted for this Constitution. The issue of Kirkuk, Khanaqin, Sinjar and other disputed areas, the oil and gas and revenue issue and the power sharing issue can only be resolved through commitment to the Constitution.

Today, at this event, I would like to express our condolences and sympathies to the families of the victims of the recent explosions in Baghdad. We assure our citizens in Iraq: your enemy is not the Kurds and their demands, and undoubtedly, the Kurds' enemies are not Arabs or any other faction in this country; our common enemies are terrorism, extremism, and the crimes that are committed against the innocent people of Iraq. We reiterate that Kurdistan, as always, remains a fortress for Iraqi freedom seekers. It is still the pillar and support of the democratic experience of Iraq; for all those who desire democracy and for the philanthropists of this country. It is the enemies of democracy and federalism in Iraq who require these issues to remain unresolved. We are committed to our rightful demands, delineated in the constitution, and we will work to implement its authority.

The people of Kurdistan have chosen the constitutional framework for solving their issues. In the permanent Iraqi Constitution and Article 140, there is a constitutional solution and legal framework for resolving the issue of Kirkuk and the other disputed areas. It is the duty of those who desire democracy in Iraq to cooperate in eliminating the traces of ethnic cleansing, and implementing Article 140. Let us all work together to compensate for the previous deprivation in those areas, through reconstruction and through supporting their administrative and security institutions and to ensure political stability and security for the people.

Kurdistan Region's relations with neighbours

Although Kurdistan is a region within the framework of the state of Iraq, history has granted us a fundamental role, a special position in relations with our neighbours. We want the Kurdistan Region to have a stable relationship with its neighbours. Obviously, this will be established on the principles of mutual interest. With Turkey, we have commercial and economic relations and cooperation which have benefited both sides and reflected positively on normalising our political relations. In this regard, we support Turkey's democratic openness towards the Kurds.

Obviously, with the Islamic Republic of Iran, we have long standing relations, as they were supportive of the oppressed people of the Kurdistan Region during their anguish. Therefore, we intend to promote our economic, cultural and other types of relations through mutual understanding.

The people of the Kurdistan Region are a faithful nation. We never forget our friends and supporters, especially our allies - the United States of America and those countries that supported Iraqis throughout Operation Iraqi Freedom. We highly appreciate this alliance and we would like to strengthen our ties, both as a Region and as Iraq, to benefit our standing within the international community, and for the benefit of strengthening our mutual goals.

Another key issue that we would like the sixth Cabinet to focus on is the issue of the Anfal campaign and Halabja. Nearly twenty years after this crime was committed, perpetrators were punished and the Anfal campaign was recognised as a genocide by the Iraqi Special Tribunal. We will work with international decision makers to officially recognise the Iraqi Special Tribunal's decision. We will also endeavour to implement the decision to compensate the victims of the Anfal campaign and those who were affected by chemical weapons. We want to rehabilitate the victims' surviving families so that they can enjoy normal living conditions. We will try to bring back the remains of the Anfal victims from the mass graves in the middle and the south of Iraq to Kurdistan, where deserved monuments can be erected for them. We will spare no effort to make this officially recognised worldwide.

Finally, with my utmost gratitude to President Jalal Talabani for his continued support, I thank Mr Masoud Barzani, President of the Region, for his support and encouragement. We require your support. We will do our utmost to live up to the expectations of our people to promote the Kurdistan Region's experience. May it please the pure spirit of the fallen, and comfort the families and victims of the Anfal and Halabja genocides and for a brighter future for our next generations; for our girls and boys of Kurdistan.

With the support of God, and our sincere efforts, we hope that on the day that we leave office, the people of the Region of Kurdistan, will be more content, more proud and more prosperous.

This speech can be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, November 12, 2009 1:51 PM
Subject: KRG statement regarding Human Rights Watch report

KRG statement on Human Rights Watch report – “On Vulnerable Ground”

Kurdistan Regional Government official statement regarding Human Rights Watch report – “On Vulnerable Ground”

10 November 2009

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has a long standing and productive relationship with Human Rights Watch (HRW). We appreciate what HRW has done in the past. As an oppressed community ourselves, we fully understand the value of ensuring justice for all members and factions of society. In addition, the KRG appreciates the interest in the condition of the minority communities in Ninevah Province’s disputed territories. We regard the well-being of all communities in these areas to be of paramount concern.

The KRG is ready and willing to look into each and every allegation, and we are ready to work on these issues under the legal framework of both the Kurdistan Region and the Republic of Iraq, with the help of HRW and other reputable human rights organisations. The KRG will investigate each specific claim outlined in the report carefully and thoroughly. There may be instances of maltreatment and neglect; the KRG does not claim to be flawless.

But the report reveals a systematic misperception of the circumstances in Ninevah and a worrying ignorance of Iraqi history. HRW therefore produces an inaccurate portrayal of the situation. Furthermore, due to the methodology employed to produce this report, it cannot be the basis for legitimate judgements or assertions.

The main thrust of this report could be grossly misleading and the KRG affirms its strong disagreement in this regard. The KRG has done more for the protection of minorities than any other entity in Iraq, and continues to insist on tolerance and peaceful coexistence in the Region and throughout Iraq.

However, it is imperative to consider the broader social and political context regarding these claims. Neither the KRG nor the Peshmerga forces have created instability in the disputed territories. On the contrary, the Peshmerga have sacrificed their lives to protect the residents in these areas from terrorists. They have been part of the solution, not the problem. Terrorists and extremists have utilised violence and intimidation, repeatedly violating the human rights of minorities. The blame falls squarely on their shoulders, and they should be held accountable.

The HRW investigation appears to have ignored the majority of people from the ethnic and religious minorities in Ninevah, who welcome the presence of the Kurdish security forces and are grateful for the assistance provided by the KRG, especially during periods of intense sectarian violence and repeated intimidation. In fact minorities, regardless of their ethnic and religious background, have come to the Kurdistan Region, fleeing violence and persecution. This stems from the KRG policy of religious and ethnic tolerance. The KRG has invested heavily in the welfare of citizens in the disputed territories, at a time when no other entity was willing to do so.

The report fails to mention the fact that following every major incident in which Iraq’s minorities have been targeted by terrorists, the KRG has provided humanitarian aid and received hundreds, sometimes thousands of

families into the KRG area, where many continue to live today in peace. If the minorities in Nineveh were being systematically intimidated by the Kurds, why would so many seek shelter in KRG-administered land?

From reading the report it would appear that all minorities in Nineveh province are against KRG policy, which is far from the truth, as elections results in the disputed areas have consistently shown.

The real problem in Nineveh governorate are the terrorists and the extremists, intent upon marginalising minorities and who also wish to marginalise the Kurds. Iraq needs an inclusive system of governance for all communities.

One of the misperceptions in the report is the assertion that Shabak and Yazidi individuals are not Kurds. The report states that these groups are ethnic minorities, and criticizes the KRG for not making such a specification. But the right to make such an ethnic categorization does not belong to HRW, just as it does not belong to the KRG. It is for the individuals themselves to decide. This is one reason why the KRG has advocated a census, to help ensure that democratic rights are secured for all citizens.

The KRG considers minority issues of genuine importance in Iraq, and we are ready to play our part to ensure that all citizens are respected and valued as equals - as we have in the drafting of both the Iraqi and the Kurdistan Region Constitutions. The KRG stands committed to the provision of fair treatment to all residents of the Kurdistan Region and the disputed territories. It is the KRG policy to ensure political stability, personal security, and the rule of law, regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation.

The way forward in Nineveh is to address these issues through a coordinated and collaborated effort between the KRG and federal government of Iraq, and to establish security in this troubled area, with the support of the coalition forces. Our common enemies are terrorists and extremists. We must establish delineated procedures through which we can, together, eliminate the scourge of terrorism and sectarian violence.

This statement can be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Wednesday, November 18, 2009 6:16 PM
Subject: KRG President Barzani's announcement regarding the January 2010 Iraqi general elections

President Barzani: Kurdistan Region will not participate in elections unless seat allocation mechanism is revised

November 17, 2009

President Barzani today made an announcement regarding the allocation of parliamentary seats in the forthcoming January 2010 Iraqi general elections. He announced that unless the recently formulated mechanism to allocate parliamentary seats to each governorate is revised, the people of the Kurdistan Region will not be able to participate in the elections.

Dr Fuad Hussein, the Kurdistan Region Presidency's Chief of Staff, said that President Masoud Barzani has been closely following the mechanism recently put in place to allocate parliamentary seats to each Iraqi governorate for elections.

He said that President Barzani believes that it is not possible to accept such a seat-allocation based on the food-rationing registry of the Iraqi Trade Ministry, because the mechanism is illogical, contradicts the reality on the ground and is a distortion of facts.

Dr Hussein stated that the Kurdistan Region Presidency views this as an attempt to reduce the number of Kurdistan Region representatives in the next Iraqi parliament and diminish their achievements.

He added that President Barzani is absolutely clear, that unless this seat allocation formula is reconsidered in a just manner, the people of Kurdistan Region will be compelled to boycott the election.

As this is an historic moment in the history of Iraq, he also called on all political parties to shoulder their responsibility to promote democracy. He urges them to refrain from supporting a deceptive mechanism that obviously targets the Kurdistan Region, and which undermines the democratic achievements made so far.

This article can be found at: www.krg.org and www.krp.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, June 01, 2009 5:04 PM
Subject: Speech by KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani on oil exports from the Kurdistan Region

PM's speech at start of oil exports

Speech by KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani at the ceremony celebrating the start of Kurdistan Region oil exports
Erbil, 1 June 2009

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests,

Good day and welcome to you all. On behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the people of the Kurdistan Region, I welcome you all to this important event in our modern history. I would very much like to welcome H.E. President Talabani, H.E. President Barzani, and all of the distinguished guests that have joined us here today to participate in this event.

I want to extend my congratulations to all those who have made this day possible, including the officials of the KRG Ministry of Natural Resources, led by Dr Ashti Hawrami, and also the oil companies that have cooperated with us, particularly those whose contribution on this day – crude oil – is about to enter the Iraqi pipeline.

This is a moment of celebration and reflection. We are very pleased to share this moment with our friends from abroad, our fellow citizens and partners from the Kurdistan Region and all of Iraq who are present with us today, and everyone following our progress in the media. In another country, today's event would be only a typical economic and technical achievement. But for the people of the Kurdistan Region, it marks a dramatic departure from our recent past.

No one should doubt that what the KRG has done is in the best interests of Iraq. We are contributing to a better and more stable future for Iraq. Today we want to take a step forward for the Kurdistan Region and for all of Iraq.

Previous regimes in Iraq exploited the country's natural resources without checks and balances on their power. Such monopolistic control of the energy sector is extremely dangerous. The people of the Kurdistan Region suffered terribly from the actions of the past regimes – promises of peace were replaced by systematic destruction, violence and genocide.

Unbalanced power is inherently self-destructive. Such consolidated power, combined with tremendous oil revenues, enabled a regime to terrorize the very people it was meant to serve.

Instead of investing in the peace, prosperity and welfare of its people, the Ba'ath regime invested in chemical weapons. These weapons were unleashed on the people of the Kurdistan Region, on the people of Iraq, and on the citizens of our neighbouring countries.

We are determined that these policies will never again be contemplated in Iraq, and certainly never implemented.

The revenues from today's historic export will - and must - be handled fairly and transparently. And oil contractors shall and must be rewarded for their contribution, according to their entitlements.

We are determined to remember our past and at the same time focus on the peace, prosperity and well being of our citizens now and in the future. Within the powers granted to the Kurdistan Region, our Parliament passed the Kurdistan Oil and Gas Law in August 2007, granting the KRG Ministry of Natural Resources the authority to negotiate and agree to long-term oil contracts.

The people of the Kurdistan Region have always sought democracy, fairness, tolerance and forgiveness, and for these objectives we look to the Iraqi Constitution for guidance.

Thousands of people are waiting patiently, under terrible conditions, for the implementation of Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution. The Constitution guarantees them the right of return. Our message is loud and clear: we want justice for the people of Kirkuk and the disputed territories of the Kurdistan Region.

In December 2005, four out of five voters endorsed Iraq's Constitution. This document became the foundation of a new, democratic and federal Iraq, and the Constitution is the supreme law of the land. This Constitution is a product of the collective desire – of all Iraqis – to prevent a repetition of past atrocities while providing a new opportunity to improve the lives of all our citizens in Iraq.

We are happy to be part of a federal Iraq within a democratic constitutional framework. When we open these valves today, the Kurdistan Region will be earning hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue for all the people of this country.

We expect federal authorities to be fair and to abide by the Constitution. At the same time, we in the Kurdistan Region also bear the responsibility of respecting and implementing the Constitution.

After the liberation of Iraq and the negotiation of the Constitution, the aspirations and expectations of the citizens of the Kurdistan Region grew considerably. Citizens expected better services, increased political freedom and tangible improvements in their daily lives. These expectations are legitimate and demand the attention of the KRG.

In response to these demands, the KRG accelerated its plans to encourage inward investment in the Region, build infrastructure, improve the delivery of essential services, strengthen our emerging democratic institutions, build confidence among political parties, enact regional laws, train our law enforcement authorities and invest in our human resources through capacity-building programmes in a variety of fields.

Due to a number of factors, we cannot claim to have met each and every demand of our people. However, we are very proud of what we have achieved so far, and we will continue.

I have no doubt that the inward investment climate in Iraq would have been much more favourable had we enacted a federal oil and gas law in 2007, and citizens throughout Iraq would have benefited.

The lack of political will on one hand, and outright political interference on the other, prevented the federal hydrocarbons draft law of February 2007 from being completed and reaching the Council of Representatives. The same problem halted the draft revenue sharing law of May 2007, which is of equal importance. In fact, we have failed our Constitution and our citizens in two fundamental areas:

First, the Constitution demands a modern law by which the oil industry should attract investment and boost oil production. Secondly, the Constitution demands a revenue sharing law based on fairness and supervised by a constitutional committee. We still do not have either of these vital laws. We still depend on a system of budget allocation, rather than a constitutionally required revenue sharing mechanism.

In the past few years, the people of Kurdistan have suffered considerably from repeated delays in budget distribution. We have no doubt that these delays are caused by political calculations rather than technical or administrative problems.

With a revenue sharing law in place, our regional government would have received its fair share on time. We would now have been in a better position to deliver much needed services to our citizens in the Kurdistan Region. Indeed, all the governorates of Iraq would have been in a much better position to provide the services that their citizens need throughout Iraq.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Upon the liberation of Iraq, we voluntarily cooperated in the reconstruction of the Iraqi government and state. We were the first among Iraqis to provide regular military forces during that difficult period of transition. Because we believe in the future of Iraq, we actively participated in the political negotiations that led to the endorsement of our Constitution. We will all feel more secure in a federal, democratic Iraq that promotes peace, stability and prosperity for its people.

Fortunately, we possess abundant natural resources to share if we put our efforts together. We must use these resources both effectively and in a timely manner for the benefit of our people and all the people of Iraq.

With that ambition and spirit in mind, we signed contracts with international oil companies in order to bring capital, technology, know-how and experience to our Region and to all of Iraq. We believe in the importance of openness, cross-border trade and foreign investment. We will only leave our past behind when we constructively focus on our future.

It is important to judge people not by what they say, but by what they do. Five years ago we promised to share our energy resources with Iraq. Today our actions and deeds speak for our words and promises.

In order to develop, the economy of Iraq must be able to compete internationally and face contemporary challenges. We have moved swiftly from exploration to production and export. We are proud to contribute to Iraq's increased production and revenues. In reality, revenue sharing will bind us together more than any political slogan.

We strongly believe that the era of threats and punishment is over. Without mutual respect and dialogue among Iraq's diverse constituencies, the country will never recover from its catastrophic past.

In recent years, the Kurdistan Region has been rebuilding and developing, economically and politically, through practical compromises. We hope to see the same spirit of negotiation throughout Iraq.

Dear guests,

We are very happy to see that so many of you have decided to celebrate this historic moment with us.

We are determined to use our natural resources in a constructive manner for the benefit of all Iraqi citizens, and to create a better future for ourselves and our neighbours, as well as for future generations.

In terms of budgetary expenditures, we believe that regional and local representatives are better equipped to understand the needs of their citizens and deliver services to meet these demands.

Economic cooperation within Iraq and across its borders will lay the foundation for a brighter collective future, and help to break the cycle of violence that has haunted Iraq for too long.

We in the KRG believe that all of Iraq's natural resources should be able reach the international market.

I would like, on this historic day, to invite everyone to join me in welcoming H.E. President Jalal Talabani and H.E. President Masoud Barzani to open the valves, allowing the oil to flow, for the benefit of every citizen in the Kurdistan Region and throughout Iraq.

Thank you very much, and welcome to you all.

This speech can be found at: www.krg.org

Note: BGR Group has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC

Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, June 18, 2009 6:32 PM
Subject: KRG welcomes updated US travel guidance for the Kurdistan Region

KRG welcomes updated US travel guidance for Kurdistan Region

June 17, 2009

US Department of State advisory cites stability in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Washington DC, USA (KRG.org) - The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) today lauded the US Department of State's updated guidelines for travel to Iraq, affirming the relative safety and security of the Kurdistan Region.

The new guidelines confirm that the governorates of Erbil, Suleimaniah and Dohuk remain more stable than the rest of Iraq, experiencing fewer terrorist attacks and lower levels of insurgent violence.

The KRG believes that the US travel advisory remains overly cautious and does not reflect the fact that the vast majority of local and international residents of the Kurdistan Region are able to go about their daily lives in a peaceful and stable environment. Nevertheless, the improvement from the previous travel advice is welcomed.

"We applaud the Department of State for updating its travel warning for Iraq. The distinction made to the Kurdistan Region will no doubt further encourage US business to look into the many investment opportunities available in the Kurdistan Region" said Mr Qubad Talabani, the KRG Representative to the US.

This updated advisory replaces the previous advisory issued on June 13th 2008, which made no distinction between safer and more dangerous parts of Iraq.

"While the Kurdistan Regional Government continues to work to further stabilise this region, we will continue to do our part to uphold peace and protect every citizen within our borders. To date, not one US citizen, soldier or contractor has been kidnapped, wounded or killed in the Kurdistan Region", affirmed Mr Karim Sinjari, the KRG's Minister for the Interior.

While acknowledging that security throughout Iraq has improved, the US Department of State particularly recognised the areas making up the Kurdistan Region as experiencing more safety than the rest of Iraq.

This article can be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Tuesday, June 30, 2009 12:16 PM
Subject: KRG Minister commends religious freedom in the Kurdistan Region

KRG Minister commends religious freedom in Kurdistan Region

Nimrud Baitu Youkhana urges all Iraq to emulate religious protections of the KRG

June 30, 2009

Washington, US (KRG.org) – Mr Nimrud Baitu Youkhana, the Minister for Tourism in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Secretary-General of the Assyrian Patriotic Party, talked of significant progress in ensuring religious freedom in the Kurdistan Region in Iraq.

During key meetings with Members of Congress, the Obama administration, and representatives of leading NGOs and the religious freedom community in the US, Minister Youkhana detailed how since the fall of Hussein, extremist groups targeted Christians and bombed their villages and churches, including his home town. This terrorism forced tens of thousands of Iraqis Christians to move to the Kurdistan Region where they were warmly welcomed and assisted.

The Minister commended highly language in the proposed Kurdistan constitution that affirms the rights of the Christian community in Iraq to have an autonomous administrative area in places where they are the majority.

“The progress the KRG has made in protecting religious opportunity and encouraging free and unfettered religious practice was warmly received by all of those I had the honour of meeting,” Minister Youkhana said. “We have reason to be proud and I was determined to make it clear that the KRG has been untiring in its efforts to ensure all religions in the Region are safe and strong. It is my wish that such progressive tolerance expands throughout Iraq.”

Mr Qubad Talabani, the KRG’s Representative to the US, hailed the Minister’s visit as an important reminder to all of the diversity of the Kurdistan Region and its commitment to human rights and freedoms.

“Minister Youkhana’s firm and clear words testifying to the KRG role in protecting and supporting Christianity throughout Iraq are crucial for our American friends to hear so as to better understand our determination in guaranteeing religious freedom within Iraqi Kurdistan,” Talabani said. “Although he is a high-ranking minister in the KRG, Minister Youkhana nevertheless speaks his own mind for his region, his political party and his religion.”

After departing Washington, the Minister continued his mission to cities throughout the US for meetings with the Assyrian-Chaldean-Syriac communities.

This article can be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, July 09, 2009 6:15 PM
Subject: KRG President Barzani, US Ambassador Hill discuss Biden Visit to Iraq

President Barzani, Ambassador Hill discuss Biden Visit to Iraq

July 9, 2009

Salahaddin, Kurdistan Region, Iraq (KRP.org) - Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani received Christopher Hill, US Ambassador to Iraq and an accompanying delegation from the US Embassy.

This meeting follows last week's visit to Iraq by US Vice President Joe Biden and the assignment of Mr. Biden as the point of contact in the White House on Iraq.

The two focused on a number of issues concerning Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, including the need for reaching political consensus among Iraq's different parties and moving the political process forward.

Outstanding issues between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the federal Government were the main topic of this meeting. Both sides noted the urgent need for effective dialogue between the KRG and Baghdad, especially after the general elections in the Kurdistan Region on 25 July 2009.

President Barzani thanked the Ambassador for his visit, the second since coming to Iraq, and also expressed his happiness for the assignment of Vice President Biden as the point of contact on Iraq. "This shows that Iraq is a top priority for the US administration," said the President.

Earlier on Tuesday, US Vice President Biden spoke with President Barzani on the telephone to discuss the outcome of his visit to Baghdad last week. He also expressed his regret that he could not visit Erbil because of strong sand storms.

In the one-hour-long phone conversation, President Barzani and US Vice President Biden touched on several issues facing Iraq and the Kurdistan Region including the implementation of Article-140 of the Iraqi Constitution on the so-called disputed areas, legislation on oil and gas, and the need for reaching political reconciliation in Iraq.

Vice President Biden agreed with President Barzani for the need to implement the much-delayed Article-140 of the Iraqi Constitution.

President Barzani assured the Vice President that he would be steadfast in his efforts to work with others for solutions to the complex issues facing Iraq.

This article can be found at: www.krp.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, July 13, 2009 6:10 PM
Subject: KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani launches the KRG Strategy on Good Governance and Transparency

Prime Minister Barzani launches governance and transparency initiative

July 12, 2009

Erbil, Kurdistan - Iraq (KRG.org) – Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani launched a ground-breaking good governance and transparency strategy today that aims to improve government accountability and efficiency.

Unveiling his administration's initiative, which has been developed with PriceWaterhouseCoopers, the Prime Minister said, “We the government, and you the people, want a government that is responsible, transparent and accountable for its actions; a government that will spare no effort in serving our people in the best manner possible; a government that will work in an open and transparent manner to achieve its goals and meet the aspirations of our citizens.”

Prime Minister Barzani said that the implementation of this strategy “will help to ensure that public funds are used properly, and make government more efficient and more effective. It will improve the delivery of services to the people of the Kurdistan Region.”

He added, “And it will help improve international and domestic confidence and increase investment and job development, while helping to raise the living standards of our Region.”

The KRG’s strategy, developed in collaboration with global experts in the field, is based on the following four principles. First, the KRG is founded on the basis of the rule of law. Second, public service is a public trust. Third, governmental functions are to be open and transparent. And fourth, public funds must always be used for their intended purposes. The strategy calls for the implementation of a diverse set of institutional reforms and specific governance activities across all sectors of government.

These actions include:

- Create an Executive Office of Governance and Integrity
- Create a code of conduct for all KRG officials
- Create a comprehensive penal code, including anti-corruption, money laundering and asset recovery laws
- Enhance public awareness and access to government information
- Install Integrity Pacts in key civil infrastructure projects
- Create a contractor ethics and integrity licensing programme
- Reform procurement policies, procedures and practices
- Strengthen financial management practices
- Create a centralised, independent contractor suspension and debarment process.

The KRG retained PriceWaterhouseCoopers, one of the worlds largest financial and accountancy consulting firms to assist the KRG in the development and implementation of this strategy. PWC Partner David Jansen, head of the PWC Global Anti-Corruption Unit, said, “The KRG has joined a growing, global movement focused on building or restructuring governmental anti-corruption systems to attract foreign direct investment, improve political stability, stimulate domestic growth and increase standards of living”.

Prime Minister's speech at launch of KRG Strategy on Good Governance and Transparency

Speech by Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani

Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq, 12 July 2009

Launch - KRG Strategy on Good Governance and Transparency

It is a pleasure and an honor to be with you today to unveil a government project which aims to promote good governance, transparency, and integrity in our government operations and practices. This project has taken tremendous efforts from the part of the government for the sole purpose of better serving our people; the great people of Kurdistan. I am here today to announce this initiative to our citizens, friends, and the world at large. The message is simple: we, the government, and you the people, want a government that is responsible, transparent and accountable for its actions. A government that will spare no effort in serving our people in the best manner possible. A government that will work in an open and transparent manner to achieve its goals and meet the aspirations of our citizens.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mahatma Ghandi once said "Corruption and hypocrisy ought not to be inevitable products of democracy, as they undoubtedly are today". Today, and unfortunately, these wise words still resonate. However, Corruption is an easy phrase to use, but a difficult charge to prove. That is why the time has never been better to have an open discussion about it. Lately, it has become popular, and fashionable I must add, to accuse the government of corruption. These accusations do not come from people who do not wish us well, nor do they want the government to succeed. This charge is also used for political gain since it is the election time. To these people I say: this project is not a reactionary move from our part nor does it have a political agenda. This is simply a project that we started piecing together a year ago and its launching time has also been previously decided.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The government of Kurdistan is accountable to no one except to our people. This is why, and as I said before, we need a national discussion about good governance, about corruption, about improvements of services, and about the best solutions to go forward and achieve our aspirations. When I say discussion, I mean an open discussion with our people, civil society organizations, intellectuals, religious leaders – to address corruption and what it means to our society. We need to understand that corruption is not simply an issue of government; it is an issue of society. It affects us all, and holds us back in the progress toward a better future.

True, mistakes were made, but only those who do not work are the ones who do not make mistakes. Sometimes, bureaucracy, slowness, and outdated procedures slow down our efforts to provide services and programs to the people. Obviously, people become frustrated, at the slowness of service, and assume that corruption is taking place, when it is not.

Our nation has a long and rich history which is a source of pride and inspiration for all of us. However, we, in the government, do not have centuries of experience as most governments do. We have been in office for 10 years. We have had to build a government in the Kurdistan Region in a short period of time. When we started we had virtually nothing. Just as we have had to build roads, bridges, hospitals and services from the ground up, we also had to build a government from the ground up. We do not have thousands of highly trained civil servants and experts. We do not have a highly developed administrative code –we operate under an outdated and inefficient system which we are assiduously working to improve. And most importantly, we do not have a regular, predictable budget process – we have an irregular and unreliable flow of revenues from Baghdad.

However, government, as it exists to serve the people, has a special obligation to do all that it can to make certain that the peoples' money is used properly, honestly, and efficiently. And this is what we are here to discuss today.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Just over one year ago, the Council of Ministers approved a decision to undertake a thorough and comprehensive evaluation of government procedures and operations to look for ways to make government more open, more accountable, and more transparent. We decided as a Cabinet to find and to use some of the world's leading experts to help us with this task.

We hired the world's largest financial and accountancy consulting firm – Pricewaterhouse Coopers, US – which is the leading private firm in matters related to governance, transparency and accountability. PWC last year began a comprehensive study of KRG processes and operations with a view towards developing a strategy that would help us to put in place solid, meaningful actions to address problems in governance and transparency. That study, and the strategy recommendations have now been completed, and we are ready to move toward implementation.

Now, some will ask – why is this being announced today? Early on in my speech I have said that this project took us a year to put together and today's launch has been agreed 6 months ago. Allow me to go into details: we began this process in July of last year, and it was expected to take one year. We have had countless meetings, reviews of documents, laws, procedures, etc. The report which PWC has prepared for us runs to over 600 pages. This process has involved close consultations with all Ministries and government offices, with international bodies, and with a range of experts from around the world. The strategy, however, is our own – developed with experts, but tailored to meet the changing needs of the KRG as it evolves into a modern, efficient government.

The benefits of this strategy are clear, and vital for our future. It will help to ensure that public funds are used properly, and make government more efficient and more effective. It will improve the delivery of services to the people of the Kurdistan Region. And it will help improve international and domestic confidence and increase investment and job development, while helping to raise the living standards of our Region.

We have now completed the first two stages of our work – the study and the development of the strategy. The strategy we are announcing today is founded on four principles:

- First, the KRG is founded on the basis of the Rule of Law. Adherence to the Rule of Law is critical to the functioning of government and to ensure that no-one in government, regardless of position, is above the Law.
- Second, Public service is a public trust. Every KRG official must recognize that they owe a legal duty and are accountable to act in the interests of the Kurdistan Region and its citizens, and will promote those interests above their own, their family or their political party.
- Third, Governmental functions shall be open and transparent. An open and transparent government promotes the interests of the Kurdistan Region, its institutions and citizenry. Ensuring that citizens have access to information on the functioning of government is an indispensable element to ensuring that KRG officials remain accountable to the voters who placed their trust in their hands.
- Finally, Public funds must always be used for their intended purposes. The fundamental principle of economy and efficiency in government underscores requires that public funds should only be used for the purposes for which they are appropriately and lawfully allocated.

Improved governance and transparency will reduce the potential for corruption and increase economy and efficiency in government. The embedded anti-corruption components of the Strategy will encompass several key areas including: awareness, law reform, training, prevention, monitoring and ultimately, detection and

enforcement. In order for this Initiative to succeed, the Strategy calls for the implementation of a diverse set of institutional reforms and specific governance activities across all sectors of government. These actions include:

- Create an Executive Office of Governance & Integrity;
- Create a Code of Conduct for all KRG officials;
- Create a comprehensive model Penal Code, including anti-corruption, money laundering and asset recovery laws;
- Provide governance training for all KRG officials;
- Provide the Supreme Audit Council with advanced training;
- Initiate KRG outreach and collaboration with international experts;
- Enhance public awareness and access to government information;
- Enact civil service reform;
- Strengthen public financial management practices;
- Reform procurement policies, procedures and practices;
- Commence a civil society participation program;
- Install Integrity Pacts in key civil infrastructure projects;
- Create and implement contractor ethics and integrity licensing program;
- Create a centralized, independent contractor suspension and debarment process;
- Adopt and fully implement the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative ("EITI") principles; and
- Deliver advanced forensic training to enforcement authorities.

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COMMUNICATIONS/REGISTRATION UNIT

It is important to note that these steps and procedures will not happen overnight, but we will begin work on them immediately. This is the beginning of an important and vital process that will put us clearly on a path toward better and more accountable government. We are doing something today that very few governments around the world have attempted to do. We have looked at our own procedures and practices and have voluntarily prepared an expert package of reforms that will improve our position. We intend to be a leader in this field, and years from now, we hope that other governments will look at what we have done, and adopt our plan as their own.

Our strategy is based on sound and accepted international practices, and we have used the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) as the basis for our actions. These steps can and will move us ahead. I ask each of you here today, and those of you watching on television to consider this a personal challenge of the highest priority. This is not an attack aimed at anyone. It is instead, a challenge to us all to improve the way we operate as a government and a society. Government, leadership, society and individuals must all engage on this important national issue.

I want to close by thanking all of you for attending, and especially offer the thanks of the KRG to the team from Pricewaterhouse Coopers, US. They have been extraordinarily helpful to us in this process and have brought us expertise and understanding built on years of work in this field. They have committed to remain with us as we implement this strategy, and we are excited and honored to be working with them.

I would also like to thank the KRG team who has been working on this initiative for a long period of time and in close coordination with PwC. I congratulate you for your efforts and wish you every success.

Thank you all once again for your attendance.

This article and speech can be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Monday, July 27, 2009 5:08 PM
Subject: KRG Officials Hail Successful Election and High Turnout

President Barzani hails successful election and high turnout July 26, 2009

Salahaddin, Kurdistan Region (KRP.org) - Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani has congratulated the people of the Kurdistan Region for their high turnout at Saturday's general elections for the Parliament and President of the Kurdistan Region.

In a statement issued today, the President described the election successful and an important step toward strengthening the foundations of democracy in the Kurdistan Region.

"Regardless of the outcome, this election was a victory for the will of the people of the Kurdistan Region," said the president.

He thanked all the security agencies in the Kurdistan Region for their important role on the Election Day. He also thanked the Independent Iraqi Electoral Commission, media organizations, the thousands of election monitors and the competing parties for making this election a success.

At the end of the statement, the President expressed his hope that the people of Kirkuk and other disputed areas will join the people of Kurdistan Region in the next elections.

This article can be found at: www.krp.org

Large turnout in peaceful Kurdistan Region elections July 26, 2009

Erbil, Kurdistan - Iraq (KRG.org) – The Kurdistan Region yesterday successfully held historic parliamentary and presidential elections.

The ballot for the president was the first direct presidential vote in the Kurdistan Region.

The vote has underlined the democratic character of the Region and reinforced the process of peaceful elections through political competition.

The Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq (IHEC) said the overall turnout was 78 per cent. In Erbil 79 per cent of eligible voters cast a ballot, in Suleimaniah 74 per cent, and in Dohuk 85 per cent.

The election was conducted by IHEC, which was responsible for ensuring free and fair voting. IHEC oversees all Iraqi elections. IHEC Commissioner Mr Faraj Al-Haidari, speaking at a press conference yesterday evening, said the commission was pleased with the conduct of the elections and that any complaints would be studied.

Ballots are being preliminarily tabulated in polling stations and then moved to Baghdad for official tabulation. International observers will accompany the ballots throughout the transfer.

Mr Karim Sinjari, the Kurdistan Regional Government's Interior Minister, speaking at the same press conference, said there had been no security incidents during the elections and a curfew was lifted four hours after voting began as it became clear the situation was normal and the curfew was not necessary.

After casting his ballot, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani remarked, “We support this election as a chance for citizens to exercise their democratic rights. I am proud to see so many people express their political views through this election, in which we all have an equal opportunity to be part of the decision-making process.”

More than 320 international observers from more than 35 organizations were registered by IHEC to monitor the election. This included observers from the United Nations, the European Union, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, and a variety of other nations and non-governmental organizations. In addition, more than 30 international media outlets were accredited to observe and report on the election.

More than 90 organizations based in Iraq and/or the Kurdistan Region also participated in the observation, with more than 10,000 individuals receiving accreditation badges from IHEC. Political parties were also granted the right to monitor the proceedings, with 47 groups and more than 27,000 individuals accredited for observation.

The Head of the Department of Foreign Relations, Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir, said, “It is important that the outside world is aware of our continued democratic development. We believe democracy is the best system, and we very much welcome the high turnout” Minister Bakir noted that the election is an important step not only for the Kurdistan Region but all of Iraq.

IHEC estimates that official results will be available in the next few days.

This article can be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Wednesday, July 29, 2009 6:10 PM
Subject: US Defense Secretary holds talks with Kurdistan Region leadership

US Defense Secretary holds talks with Kurdistan Region leadership

July 29, 2009

Erbil, Kurdistan – Iraq (KRG.org) – United States Secretary of Defense Dr Robert Gates today in Erbil met President Masoud Barzani, congratulated him on the recent election and assured him of the US commitment to Iraq.

The US Defense Secretary was accompanied by Multi-National Force in Iraq Commanding General Ray Odierno, and US Embassy in Baghdad Charge d' Affaires Ambassador Robert Ford.

Secretary Gates congratulated President Masoud Barzani on the recent election, and assured officials that the responsible drawdown of troops would not diminish US commitment to Iraq. He explained that the US values friendship with the Region and with a united, federal and democratic Iraq, and stands ready to help the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the federal government as they address outstanding issues.

Mr Gates reiterated the message he delivered to federal government officials in Baghdad yesterday – the need to base decisions on the Constitution and strive for peaceful solutions that account for the needs of all concerned. He affirmed that the US would remain engaged with all parties on unresolved issues. Secretary Gates underlined the history of friendly relations between the Kurdistan Region and the United States and also welcomed the improved relations between the KRG and Turkey.

President Barzani outlined his vision for the Region and Iraq. “We have participated in the construction of a new and better Iraq, with the understanding that all components of society would be equal under the rule of law.”

He said, “The Constitution, as the supreme law of the land, must serve as the starting point for dialogue on outstanding political issues. So long as this is the case, we are ready and willing to engage in serious discussions at any time. Our only weapon will be the Constitution of Iraq. Now that our election has passed, and we expect the official results today, we will resume political discussions on these matters with Baghdad.”

Vice President Kosrat Rasul added, “We appreciate the role that the United States has played in Iraq. It is important that the US remains engaged as we move forward in addressing key issues.”

Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani said, “Our insistence on certain demands for our people should not be misconstrued as separatist demands. We simply want to ensure that our tragic history is not repeated, and that we can arrive at a formula to serve the interest of all Iraqi people.”

He continued, “Understanding the culture and background of all components of Iraqi society is important. We must be considered equal partners in Iraq. And in this regard I think the passage of revenue sharing legislation will bring us closer – more than any other political slogan – and promote dialogue on other outstanding issues. As the US undertakes a responsible drawdown of forces, we believe there is a moral obligation for the US to remain politically involved as we strive towards stability and security.”

The meeting, which took place in the capital of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, was attended by a number of senior KRG and US officials.

This article can be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Saturday, August 01, 2009 4:30 PM
Subject: KRG statement regarding three American citizens detained by the Islamic Republic of Iran

KRG statement regarding three American citizens detained by the Islamic Republic of Iran August 1, 2009

Statement by the Kurdistan Regional Government regarding three American citizens detained by the Islamic Republic of Iran

On 28 July 2009 four American citizens entered the Kurdistan Region in Iraq through the Ibrahim Khalil border crossing from Turkey under standard procedures. They then travelled to the city of Suleimaniah within the Kurdistan Region in Iraq.

On 30 July at 6pm, three of the four Americans decided to go by themselves by taxi to Ahmedawa resort, situated in the Hawraman area near the Iranian border.

After walking around the area and hiking the mountain, they lost their way due to their lack of familiarity with the location, and entered Iranian territory. On 31 July at about 1.30 pm, they were detained by the authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran at the border.

These American citizens visited the border area willingly and of their own accord, without prior consultation. However, the Kurdistan Regional Government will work closely with the US Regional Reconstruction Team and the Consulate General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Erbil on this matter, and will do its utmost to find a solution.

This statement can be found at: www.krg.org

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Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Tuesday, August 04, 2009 7:16 PM
Subject: KRG President Barzani meets with Iraqi President Talabani and Prime Minister Maliki

President Barzani, President Talabani meet Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki

August 2, 2009

Dokan, Kurdistan Region, Iraq (KRP.org) – Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani met with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and Iraqi President Jalal Talabani to discuss solutions to outstanding disputes between the Kurdistan Region and the Iraqi federal government.

In a meeting in the resort town of Dokan, Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki, Iraqi President Talabani and President Barzani all reaffirmed their commitment to resolve the stalled issues within the framework of the Iraqi Constitution.

Chief among the disputes are the issue of a federal hydrocarbons law, the determination of the boundaries of the Kurdistan Region through implementation of Article-140 of the Iraqi Constitution, and the status of Kurdish Peshmerga forces in the Iraqi army.

"The challenges that face the political process require more meetings and cooperation between all Iraqi people," Prime Minister Maliki said at a news conference with President Barzani and Iraqi President Talabani. "I am very optimistic after this meeting."

President Barzani said that a high-level delegation from the Kurdistan Region would soon visit Baghdad to hold further talks and resolve all the outstanding disputes.

President Talabani described the Prime Minister's visit as very important and reiterated that the Iraqi Constitution is the basis for the resolution of all issues.

This article can also be found at: www.krp.org

Note: BGR Government Affairs has filed registration statements under the Foreign Agents Registration Act with regard to its representation and dissemination of information on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq. Additional information is on file with the Foreign Agents Registration Unit of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC.

Letter From Erbil

From: Letter From Erbil [letterfromerbil@kurdistantoday.net]
Sent: Thursday, August 13, 2009 1:53 PM
Subject: KRG's US Representative says Kurdistan rose to the challenge of free and fair elections

KRG's US Representative says Kurdistan rose to the challenge of free and fair elections

August 13, 2009

Washington, US – (KRG.org) – The Kurdistan Regional Government's Representative to the US on Tuesday said that the Kurdistan Region successfully held free, fair and vibrant elections, and will continue on the path of democratic self-governance. Mr Qubad Talabani addressed an audience of some 100 policy makers and academics at the Middle East Institute (MEI), a non-governmental organisation that fosters understanding of the Middle East among Americans.

Mr Talabani said, "We were challenged by some to achieve the 'gold standard' in elections. We accepted that challenge – and we delivered. We have achieved much in our experiment in democratic self governance – and of course there is much more to achieve. And we intend to achieve it."

Mr Talabani talked of the open and competitive vote that re-elected Massoud Barzani to the presidency with 69 percent, while electing to the parliament a broad and diverse representation from all sectors of the Kurdistan Region's society.

"Now, there will be an even more vibrant opposition within the Kurdistan parliament," he said. "We all expect vigorous debate and there certainly will be new dynamics within the KRG and throughout Iraqi Kurdistan."

Mr Talabani noted that the election was praised as transparent by the Independent High Electoral Commission of Iraq. Independent organisations including the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq, the US Embassy in Baghdad, the Presidency of the European Union and the Kurdish-American Congressional Caucus, the Arab League delegation and diplomats accredited to Iraq also commended the Kurdistan Region's election process. At least 30 percent of the new parliament will be female – a percentage greater than any regional or national government in the Middle East, North America and most of Europe.

Mr Talabani also spoke about the recently launched KRG Strategy on Good Governance and Transparency, a programme aimed at preventing corruption within government. He said, "We made the good governance initiative a priority. To that end, we teamed up with world renowned consultants PriceWaterhouseCoopers to review current conditions, the way our government works and all governance related issues. This helped us develop a clear-eyed, blunt critique and action plan to address the crucial issues of good governance, anti-corruption and transparency."

Mr Talabani also discussed how the Kurdistan Region in Iraq still has steps to undertake before becoming a mature democracy. While after 1992 until recently security was the main focus, today with a stable society the government has the opportunity to institute a full and flourishing democracy.

Read [Mr Talabani's speech](#) at the MEI.

This article can be found at: www.krg.org

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